

Letter From Hon. Lysander W. Babbitt

Lysander W. Babbitt

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"After the enemy's line had been broken, and his whole force put to flight, I rode to the left of our line and assisted in gathering together and sending to the rear a large number of prisoners, who had been captured with the artillery taken by Benteen's brigade. While engaged in this duty I heard of the capture of General Marmaduke, and some twenty minutes later, meeting General Pleasanton, who was just coming to the field, I informed him of the fact, also telling him that Marmaduke had already been sent to the rear. I then, at his request, took several squads of our men who had been separated from their commands during the charge, and proceeded to pick up prisoners, who were scattered over every part of the battle ground, some under guard, and many working their way to the rear without guards, and no guides except their own fears.

LETTER FROM HON. LYSANDER W. BABBITT.

COUNCIL BLUFFS, IOWA, August 20, 1870.

EDITOR OF THE ANNALS OF IOWA:—

Dear Sir:—I have just finished reading that portion of the July number of the ANNALS devoted to the "Pioneers of Marion County," and find it, in most respects, very correct; but in the sketch of Judge Williams, in the anecdotes related of him, you have the wrong parties upon the occasion of his nomination for the office of supreme judge by the legislative caucus. I was a member of the legislature at the time, representing Marion and nine other counties, and the incident related transpired in my room in Swan's Hotel. Hon. Geo. W. Jones and the Hon. T. Wilson were candidates for United States senator, and the Hon. J. Williams, S. C. Hastings, and many others, were candidates for supreme judges. I was numbered among the friends of Williams, and when

the caucus met, without showing any great anxiety upon the subject, went round among the members, saying: "Old Joe is a good old fellow, let us give him a complimentary vote," which proposition was agreed to by several members who desired the nomination of some other person. It took nineteen votes to nominate, and when the vote was counted, Judge Williams had received twenty-three votes, being a majority of the whole vote cast; whereupon I arose and said: "Inasmuch as the Hon. Joseph Williams has, on an informal ballot, received a majority of all the votes in this convention, I move that he be declared the nominee for supreme judge by acclamation." The vote was instantly taken, and before his opponents could rally, he was declared the nominee, whereupon two or three members whom I had solicited to give him a complimentary vote, exclaimed, "G—d— Mr. Babbitt's complimentary vote."

After the adjournment of the caucus, all hands were invited by Jones, Dodge, Williams, and other successful candidates, to partake of an oyster supper and free whisky, at a saloon near by, which invitation was pretty generally accepted, and at which the defeated candidates partook pretty freely of the last refreshment named. About twelve o'clock the party broke up, and the members retired to their rooms. The defeated candidates, Wilson and Hastings, roomed in adjoining rooms to the one occupied by me, and were very much excited over their defeat; so much so, that they walked from room to room, bewailing their fate, and declaring that they had been repudiated by the democracy. When they came into my room, I attempted to console them, telling them that they were not repudiated, but that other democrats had more friends in the caucus than they, whereupon Wilson exclaimed: "If I had been beaten by a high-minded, honorable man, I could have stood it without a murmur; but to be defeated by a dancing-master, ruins my reputation forever." To this speech Hastings responded as follows: "Wilson, you have been defeated by a high-minded, honorable man—a gentleman—a dancing-master—I

congratulate you; but for me there is no consolation, for, by G—d, the fiddler beat me.”

In relation to myself, I have to say that I am not quite as old as your report makes me; and you might have added to your history of my career as a politician, that I was twice elected recorder of the city of Burlington, and was twice elected to represent the county of Marion, and other counties attached to it, in the state legislature.

With the slight exception of misspelling names, and a few other unimportant mistakes, you have given a very correct history of the early settlement of Marion county, and I take this occasion to congratulate you upon your remarkable success.

Respectfully yours,

LYSANDER W. BABBITT.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THIRTY-FOUR YEARS AGO.

BY HAWKINS TAYLOR.

On Saturday, in early May, 1836, in company with Col. Wm. Patterson, A. H. Walker, and Green Carey (the two latter now dead), we crossed the Mississippi river from Appanoose to Fort Madison, Wisconsin (then spelled Ouisconsin). Appanoose was then the larger town, and aspired to be a great city very soon. The old man White and his son-in-law, Doolittle, owned the ferry, and they had but a day or two before returned from the Ohio river with an old steam ferry-boat. We landed at the point below the mouth of the branch below the present penitentiary. The first thing that presented itself to our view was the wreck of a board frame house that had been capsized and thrown over the high bank down into the river, the day before. On inquiry, we learned

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